



University of Connecticut
OpenCommons@UConn

Master's Theses

University of Connecticut Graduate School

5-5-2017

Exploring Role Conflict and Perceived Expectations of Female Student-Athletes in High Performing Sports

Sofia Read

University of Connecticut - Storrs, sofia.read@uconn.edu

Recommended Citation

Read, Sofia, "Exploring Role Conflict and Perceived Expectations of Female Student-Athletes in High Performing Sports" (2017). *Master's Theses*. 1076.

https://opencommons.uconn.edu/gs_theses/1076

This work is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Connecticut Graduate School at OpenCommons@UConn. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of OpenCommons@UConn. For more information, please contact opencommons@uconn.edu.

Exploring Role Conflict and Perceived Expectations of Female Student-Athletes in High
Performing Sports

Sofia Read

B.S., Towson Univeristy, 2015

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science

At the Univeristy of Connecticut

2017

APPROVAL PAGE

Master of Science Thesis

Exploring Role Conflict and Perceived Expectations of Female Student-Athletes in High
Performing Sports

Presented by

Sofia Read, B.S.

Major Advisor _____
Dr. Laura Burton Date

Associate Advisor _____
Dr. Joseph Cooper Date

Associate Advisor _____
Dr. Jennifer McGarry Date

University of Connecticut

2017

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the love and support of my family, friends, and Sport Management faculty. For Dr. Burton – thank you for guidance and constantly pushing me to think deeper about my research. To the rest of the Sport Management faculty and my defense committee, Dr. Cooper and Dr. McGarry – I appreciate your support this past semester and also over the past two years. I would also like to thank Charles Macaulay for serving as a peer debriefer, providing suggestions, and much needed encouragement throughout the process. I am so grateful for the UConn Sport Management cohort of students and staff and certainly would not have been able to complete this without their support. Thank you for providing me with one of the most impactful two years of my educational and professional career.

I would also like to thank every teammate I have ever had the pleasure of playing with during my athletic career. From recreational leagues, college teams, and semi-professional leagues, so many powerful and exceptional women have constantly surrounded me. You all inspire me every single day and I am so grateful to have shared so many irreplaceable experiences with you.

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Literature Review.....	10
3. Methodology.....	31
4. Findings and Discussion.....	37
5. Conclusion.....	51
Appendix.....	58
References	59

Chapter 1: Introduction

Sport has the ability to empower and create change. It is a cross-cultural language that unites people, dissolves boundaries, and eliminates differences. Sport is a beautiful medium through which much can change and much can occur; yet there are flaws. Similar to society, it operates within a system where power and privilege are prevalent and maintain a significant presence (Carter-Francique & Regan, 2012; Chaplin, 2012). Some sport programs are created to develop underserved populations, empower marginalized communities, and create safe spaces around the world. Even considering the safe spaces and intentionally specialized programs, society has a history of excluding and ostracizing women from sport. It has only been a mere 50-plus years since women truly began to earn a seat at the table in sport. Beginning in the 1960's, women's involvement in sport has slowly developed. In the early to mid 20th century, the demands at home and ideals of 'true womanhood', kept women from entering the sport sphere (Birrell, 1988, p. 461). In the next decade, specific programs and legislation were implemented to increase opportunities for women and girls. These include the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women in 1971, Title IX in 1972, and the Women's Sports Foundation in 1974 (Birrell, 1988, p. 463). During the 1980s, the NCAA began supporting women's sports, however the number of women in head coaching and leadership roles severely decreased, by over 60% in just 10 years (Birrell, 1988, p. 474).

Although discriminatory practices in the U.S. have since been declined, through legislation such as Title IX (1972), Title VII (1964), and the Equal Pay Act (1963), women continue to face affects of the intentional exclusion. Title IX of the Educational

Amendments Act was passed to guarantee that “no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (NCAA.org). This law, among others, ensures equal educational opportunity. Title VII and the Equal Pay Act prohibit employment and wage discrimination based on sex. These legal features and programs continue to develop opportunities for women across sporting roles however, the greater scheme of our patriarchal society continues to affect the value we place on women in sport, both intentional and perceived.

In 1972, Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act was passed and although the amendment was not specifically geared toward athletic participation, it has had an immense affect on young girls’ exposure and access to sporting opportunities. According to the Women’s Sports Foundation, in 1972 just 27 girls participated in varsity high school sports, today 40% of girls in high school play sports (Carver, 2011). Almost 45 years later and the participation of female athletes at the collegiate level have increased immensely – by over 500% (Carver, 2011).

Title IX brought greater opportunities for funding and participation for young girls and women in sport. Increased opportunities allowed women to continue their athletic experiences and gain greater leverage and notoriety in the sport world. Women have fought for equality in sport for decades, and continue to do so today. Unfortunately, there are few sport organizations that practice equitable treatment and compensation between men and women, and most are seldom in the national spotlight (Breanna, 2016).

Despite the complex relationship between gender and sport, specifically in opportunities and treatment, there are immense positive outcomes of participation in organized sport. These benefits, specifically for females are a more positive self-concept, body image, and athletic competence (Miller & Levy, 1996). Sport and physical activity is a platform through which a participant's social, emotional, mental, and physical health can improve (Edwards & Casper, 2012). Young girls that participate in sport during their early years of development, are more likely to continue healthy habits into adulthood and are less susceptible to developing health related issues such as heart disease and obesity (Edwards & Casper, 2012, p. 75). Athletes continue to reap benefits of participation into their young adulthood as well. According to the NCAA and the Gallup Index Report (2015), all student-athletes have much more post-graduation success in the areas of purpose, social, financial, community, and physical well-being. Essentially, they tend to experience more financial security, feelings of belonging, and overall live healthier, more personally fulfilling lives. In addition, former female student-athletes are more likely to be engaged in their work than male student-athletes and non-athletes (Gallup Index Report, 2015). Women in the NCAA reported that their involvement in college sports had an overwhelming positive effect on their personal responsibility, teamwork skills, work ethic, leadership skills, personal values and ethics, time management skills, understanding of other races, self confidence, study skills and commitment to volunteerism (NCAA Goals, 2015).

A major factor in the lived experience of individuals and their sporting experiences is gender. Gender is socially defined and constructed, performed, and produced through interactions across a variety of platforms and activities. The practices

tend to perpetuate a stereotypical form of gender expression as Carter-Francique and Regan (2012) explained, “gendered behavior is a developmental process that is never completed and always influenced by social context” (p. 333). The complex gendered expectations to act and perform in particular way are communicated to youth directly and indirectly, and ultimately have an impact on their every day decisions as they mature (Carter-Francique & Regan, 2012). For young girls and women, they socialized to be passive, delicate, compassionate, and emotional and are expected to conform to these norms within the sporting context (Sartore-Baldwin, 2012)

The systemic inequities that occur across sporting experiences based on gender reach far beyond compensation and opportunities. Female athletes experience greater holistic success, higher graduation rates, and greater engagement compared to men competing at the same level (The Gallup Purdue Index Report, 2015; Busteed, 2016) largely because they are constantly pressured to strive for perfection (Chow, 2004). However, this specific group continues to face stereotypes and judgments that compromise their actions and accomplishments in the sports-sphere (Hermann & Vollmeyer, 2016 ; Hively & El-Alayli, 2014; Krane et al 2004; Lance, 2004 ; Mean & Kassing, 2008; Royce, Gebelt, & Duff, 2003). Women face negative stereotypes about their appearance, gender identity, sexual identity, and demeanor on an every day basis (Duke & Kreshel, 1998; Chow, 2004; Signorelli, 1997); Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005). The majority of research pertaining to the intersection of various identities associated with student-athletes often dissects race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual identity. However, researchers have yet to fully examine the implications of gender on the holistic experiences of student-athletes. Specifically, there is a paucity of research that has

explored how and why female student-athletes come to manage and navigate different expectations and perceptions of athletic and academic abilities. As such, the purpose of this study was to investigate the specific experiences of high athletic performing teams at a NCAA Division I institution. In order to better understand the experiences of female student-athletes, it is important to understand the context in which the students operate, and how their experiences as women in sport are framed by the material and socio-cultural value placed on sport. The inequitable monetary and material value espoused in professional sport organizations are elements that affect every level of sport underneath them, especially collegiate

Professional Sport. The Grand Slam tournaments in tennis, the Professional Squash Association, The International Volleyball Federation (FIVB), the World Surf League, and several World Major Marathons are the few sporting bodies that exhibit equitable treatment towards male and female athletes (Breanna, 2016). Access, funding, and opportunity have been the primary concerns for advocates and activists who have made it their objective to continue to bring women's issues to the forefront in sport. The WNBA is one of the most successful women's professional sport leagues and the NWSL has experienced continuous growth in its own right, despite financial difficulties associated with previous attempts. The development of these leagues is encouraging, yet frustrating nonetheless because they do not compare to the girth and plethora of men's professional sport leagues domestically and around the globe.

The WNBA, National Pro Fastpitch, and National Women's Soccer League, are the top three professional women's leagues in the United States. Though these are all successful leagues now, it has not been an easy road. There have been three attempts at a

Women's professional soccer league since 2001– the Women's United Soccer Association, Women's Professional Soccer, and now the National Women's Soccer League. In addition, the WNBA would not be in place today had it not been for the large financial support by the NBA (Clarke, 2015). The women's leagues are not nearly as visible and popular as the NBA, MLS, or NBA. Prize money, salaries, and media exposure are prominent domains of continued inequality across the sporting context. The minimum salary in 2015 for the NBA was over 90% more than the minimum for the WNBA and the NBA league maximum was 99% more (Pay Inequity in Athletics, 2016). In addition, the US Men's National Soccer Team earned four times the amount of prize money for placing 11th in the 2014 World Cup compared to the 2015 World Cup Champions – the US Women's National Team.

In 2014, ESPN, the leading broadcaster of sporting news devoted a mere 3.2% of their time to women's sports and only receive 4% of media coverage across all platforms (Good, 2015; Ottaway, 2016). In comparison to participation rates, these numbers are discouraging. Women make up 40 percent of active sport participants in high school or college, and roughly 50 percent identify as sport fans (Jones, 2015; Ottaway, 2016). The disparity between media visibility of women in sport and participation rates and fandom indicates the need to address gendered experiences in sport. These statistics do not go unnoticed and continuing to ignore female athletes and spectators demonstrates another element of the patriarchal hegemony of sport.

Intercollegiate Sport. The Learfield Directors Cup is an award that recognizes institutions that achieve success across men's and women's sports (<http://thedirectorscup.com/>). Points are awarded according to the athletic success of 20

sports (10 men's and 10 women's) in Division I. The 2014-2015 Directors Cup was awarded to Stanford with a total of 1448 points. Interestingly, almost 64% of the institutions' points came from success in women's sports. Across the top 5 finishers in the 2014-2015 Learfield Cup, women's teams recorded on averaged 57.56% of each institution's total points. In comparison, these institutions reported spending upwards of 65% more on men's sports than women's, with an average difference of \$25,832,591 spent annually.

Across the NCAA, women only receive 45% of athletic scholarship money, 40% operating dollars, and 36% of recruitment spending (Pay Inequity in Athletics, 2016). The impact of the discrepancies between national athletic successes and spending on men's and women's sports is just a small indicator of the potential impact on female athletes when they are performing at the highest level, yet not receiving comparable treatment. Despite incredible athletic accomplishments, female student-athletes seldom earn equitable attention and resources to continue to grow.

At the collegiate level, the hopeful promise of continued success in women's professional sports is contrasted with the reality that opportunities are few and far between. Theoretically, female sport teams should have similar locker rooms and playing fields as the men. However, depending on the institution, these amenities, as well as athletic resources and notoriety across campus are severely dissimilar, no matter their level of success. It is forty five years since the passage of Title IX and at the Division I FBS level, median expenditures for men's and women's teams have both doubled, but women's team's budgets and expenses are still less than half of men's (NCWGE, 2017). In addition, the median expenses per athlete has significantly increased for men's sports

over the past decade (NCWGE, 2017). Often a byproduct of the lack of resources for female athletes is unequal treatment and expectations for women in intercollegiate sport. Student-athletes are forced to balance a dually conflicting identity of being a student - spending almost 40 hours per week on academic related assignments, attending class, and passing in order to maintain athletic eligibility, all while committing upwards of 34 hours per week in practice and competition with their teams as athletes (NCAA Goals, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

The underrepresentation of women in athletics in the media, as coaches, in leadership roles, and across the industry affects the attitudes that young girls have towards a career in sport. We can assume that the messages that the media, spectators, athletic departments, and leagues are portraying have an adverse affects on the lives of female student-athletes across college campuses. The media, stereotypes, and daily interactions are bound to make an impact on the expectations and decisions of participants at a young age and through adulthood. The students-athletes on high athletic performing teams face a unique predicament where they may be responsible for the athletic notoriety of their university and perform at a consistently high level, yet there is no significant progression in treatment at the professional level, if that is even an option. The purpose of this research study was to examine how female student-athletes in high athletic performing sports navigate their dual student and athlete identities and associated expectations. There is research that examines specific realms of each of these identities, however none of them view the female student-athlete experience on a grand scale – particularly how each of the micro components intersect and affect one another. Female student-athletes on championship caliber teams are subject to a more complex student-

athlete experience compared to their male counterparts because of their complex and sometimes conflicting roles as females, students, and student-athletes in a society that continues to devalue women in sport.

The student-athlete identity is complex and requires maturity and self-awareness to navigate successfully. Role conflict in student-athletes is a major point of research due to the incompatible nature of both academic and athletic time demands. Role conflict and multiplicity of selves are both theories that attempt to frame and understand how student-athletes learn to navigate and be successful in both disciplines. There is currently extensive research to examine how female student-athletes negotiate both a feminine and masculine athletic identity (Krane et al 2004; Lance, 2004; Mean & Kassing, 2008; Royce, Gebelt, & Duff, 2003). Additionally, there is research to indicate that female student-athletes tend to have a well-rounded student-athlete experience and higher levels of career maturity (Houle & Kluk, 2015; Reimer & Schroeder, 2001). However, there is a lack of research linking these major elements, specifically how and why female student-athletes tend to experience greater holistic success in the classroom, in athletics, and in overall campus engagement. Truthfully, there is a lack of scholarship in general aimed to discover the experiences of female student-athletes, not related to their sexuality.

Previous research separates each component of the female student-athlete identity and experience – as a female, student-athlete, and athlete specifically. However, in order to fully comprehend the entirety of the identity, it is important to take a macro-level approach and dissect how each of these components may affect them as a whole. Combining the research presented on the student-athlete experience, conflicting expectations, and the impact of gender and messages from prominent role senders on

these experiences helps us understand the entirety of the situation. This study sought to understand how these women learn to manage their conflicting identities, and the role of parental, coach, peer, and societal pressures in the process. In addition, the following study explored how female student-athletes on high athletic performing Division I sport teams have learned to cope with their conflicting identities, yet also perform at an extremely high level in both. Further, an additional aim was to identify where their pressures to excel come from, how the women perceived their role on campus and in the classroom, how they constructed their identity, and why this is the case for female student-athletes.

Research Questions

1. What are the academic and athletic expectations of female student-athletes?
- 2 . What is the role of expectations from salient role senders (i.e coaches, parents, peers) in the configuration of the student and athlete identities and priorities? How do these factors shape academic and sport related goals?
3. How do female student-athletes on high performing teams manage their student-athlete identity in an effort to be successful in both roles?
4. What is the impact of gender stereotypes and role conflict on their experiences and perceived expectations on performance in the classroom and in sport?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The student-athlete and role conflict

Intercollegiate student-athletes balance a multitude of demands as both students and athletes. Role conflict occurs when persons perceive their role expectations to be

incompatible and therefore experience conflicting attitudes as a result of membership in specific groups (Lance, 2004). Student-athletes as a population have demonstrated difficulty coping with both roles (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). Female student-athletes in particular are susceptible to greater role conflict since they face opposing expectations related to gender role expectations to act more feminine while also embracing an athletic role that requires more masculine attributes (e.g., being competitive, aggressive) (Lance, 2004; Krane et al, 2004). These factors contribute to an understanding that female student-athletes find it much more difficult to “meet both athletic and academic expectations” (Lance, 2004).

Most research involving female student-athletes is focused on the feminine versus masculine identities assumed to be present in high athletic involvement. Krane and her colleagues (2004) found that in order to negotiate social expectations surrounding athleticism and femininity best, female athletes are likely to separate the social and athletic facets of their lives. They are often confronted with circumstances that trivialize the traditional sense of femininity and therefore have to put aside their feminine identity or exaggerate it, depending on the circumstance (Krane et al., 2004). For example, they may enhance their femininity by wearing makeup, doing their hair, and dressing up outside of the sport space, but do not focus on these things when performing athletically (Krane et al., 2004).

According to Mean and Kassing (2008), the female student-athlete experience regarding gender is three-fold. They have to 1) learn to manage gender, 2) do athletic identity, and 3) do female athletic identity. Essentially, they must control both gender and athletic expectations and norms, and often have to separate the female and athlete

identities before even addressing the student component. There are three approaches to confronting gender in athletics, “fore fronting gender while rendering it invisible, managing the tricky yet routine nature of addressing gender, and acknowledging but minimizing gender differences and gender politics” (Mean & Kassing, 2008, p. 132). It is difficult to adequately address each of these elements because experiences in sport and society as a whole are largely dependent on different identities, especially gender, race, and social class. This is why we attempt to understand the female student-athlete experience to be so different from a male athlete’s experience. Hegemonic masculinity ensures that women will not have the same encounters as men, and this is not exclusive to sport.

Hegemonic masculinity is defined as, “the process by which the most dominant form of masculinity exerts power and control over other masculinities and femininity” (Carter-Francique & Regan, 2012, p. 334). This concept ensures that the white, middle-class, heterosexual masculinity is perceived as the norm and dictates gender ideologies. It would both detrimental and incorrect to assume that every student-athlete has the same sporting experience. Race and social class are also major factors in an individual’s lived experiences. Critical race theory suggests that race matters and that society still operates under systems of white supremacy where whites, overwhelmingly control power, resources, ideas related to white superiority and entitlement, and that these are re-enacted across a variety of institutions (Singer, 2012). Social class also divides communities into hierarchies and has an impact on an individual’s wealth, power, culture, identity, access, and life chances (Chaplin, 2012). The impact of power and privilege are evident across race, class, and gender.

Sport and physical activity are domains in which participants experience pressure to adhere to gendered expectations and ideal (Carter-Francique & Regan, 2012, p.335). This goes beyond conforming to ideal physical body shapes. Hegemonic masculinity is reinforced through media outlets, language, images, and daily discourse that attribute men as brave, strong, and powerful and women as weak, passive, and nurturing. Individuals discipline themselves in order to uphold the ideals of femininity and masculinity (Carter-Francique & Regan, 2012). The constant negotiation of gender ideals and an individual's identity increases the likelihood of experiencing role conflict and foreclosure.

In a comprehensive study of role conflict in student-athletes, Lance (2004) found that women are over two-times more likely than males to be high on the role conflict index. In addition, female student-athletes were less likely to admit that it is difficult to meet both athletic and academic expectations (Lance, 2004). This is interesting because women often perform better in the classroom. According to the NCAA, the Graduation Success Rate (GSR) of female student-athletes is 91, compared to 79 for male student-athletes (NCAA Research Staff, 2016, p. 12). The women's sport that receives the most media attention and investment dollars, women's basketball, demonstrated a GSR of 89. Men's basketball GSR is 77 (Hosick, 2015).

Competing in intercollegiate sport as a woman is a complex experience to navigate. Many teams consistently produce notably successful seasons, however, the athletes may not be adequately celebrated and supported by the university, peers, and in the greater context of society. Although Title IX was enacted close to 45 years ago, sport still exists as a male dominated domain. Male faces and bodies continue to control the

majority of public attention, broadcasting news, and notoriety (Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015). More money and resources are put into men's sports as well. In fact, out of the top 5 Learfield Director's Cup finalists, each athletic department committed, on average, 57.9% of total expenses to men's teams, which amounts to a difference of over \$25,000,000. Unlike their male counterparts, female student-athletes do not necessarily have as promising futures in professional sport due to the lack of opportunity and instability of such leagues. For female student-athletes, it can be difficult to navigate the multiplicity of demands, especially when their athletic careers seem to be less promising in terms of pay and notoriety in the sports communities. Though there are men's teams that face similar expected career termination, women also confront a myriad of gender related expectations that their male counterparts do not have to navigate.

Identity foreclosure

Role conflict can also be linked to identity foreclosure, which has profound negative affects on the career readiness of college athletes. Identity foreclosure occurs when individuals commit to the demands of a specific environment without exploring additional possibilities. Among several negative consequences of identity foreclosure, students may exhibit dependent decision making styles, immaturity, and low autonomy (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). The time demand required of student-athletes leads to restricted career and educational opportunities or plans, and thus a potential for identity foreclosure. Using the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS), Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer (1996) confirmed that commitment and exploration of the career and athletic identities are separate processes.

Identity foreclosure is common among all student-athletes, especially those in revenue producing and high profile sports (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). However, it is important to note that female athletes exhibit higher levels of career maturity, and a stronger student identity, meaning they often experience greater holistic development and exploration during their undergraduate education (Houle & Kluk, 2015; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996; Sturm, Feltz, & Gilson, 2011). The tendencies we often attribute to high profile male athletes are not present among the same female population.

Using the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) and Career Maturity Scale (CMS), Murphy, Petitpas & Brewer (1996) confirm that athletic identity and identity foreclosure are inversely related to career maturity. Meaning, the more invested in an athletic identity that a student is, the less likely he/she is to explore additional career and educational opportunities (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). Female athletes specifically exhibited higher levels of career maturity across all levels of sport. One popular hypothesis pertaining to the expression of higher career maturity across female athletes is that they continuously engage in exploratory behaviors due to the lack of professional opportunities available to them after they complete their eligibility in college athletics (Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, p. 244, 1996). As a result, female athletes are encouraged to focus on academics and finding a more viable career after sport.

More recently, Houle and Kluk (2015) used the same measurements, Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) and Career Maturity Scale (CMS), and found that both male and female NCAA Division I student-athletes suffer from high levels of athletic identity and thus low expressions of career maturity. Student-athletes that focus

too much on their athletic identity are often less engaged, underprepared, and more indecisive about potential career options outside of sport (Houle & Kluk, 2015). In addition to these components, Houle and Kluck (2015) also examined the self-efficacy of student-athletes - that is, their ability to feel comfortable about career decisions and ability to make their own decisions. They concluded that self-efficacy and the athlete identity are inversely related (Houle & Kluk, 2015). In college, these experiences are not entirely unique to student-athletes, however it is important to recognize that they often have less time to dedicate to exploratory and holistic tasks, which affect their overall campus experiences and preparedness for life after sport (Houle & Kluk, 2015). The findings suggest that the variables that are significant predictors of career maturity are psychological rather than demographic. It is suggested that additional research be conducted to explain the psychological relationship rather than differences in scholarship money. Perceptions and stereotypes and the psychological affect of those expectations could be considered factors in career maturity.

Women participating in intercollegiate sport tend to have a higher achieving academic mind set, while male athletes slowly disassociate themselves from academic goals (Reimer, Beal & Schroeder, 2001). In a study that examined the experiences of female student-athletes as compared to previous literature encompassing predominantly male students, females exhibited different forms of academic commitment in relationship to the sport they played. Tennis athletes knew their career would some day be terminated, due to the lack of post collegiate opportunities (Reimer, Beal & Schroeder, 2001). Therefore, they slowly became disengaged with the sport and increasingly engaged with preparing for a career. Basketball players, however, felt more motivation to excel in

athletics because of higher team expectations, the need to continue earning a scholarship, and possibly playing post-college ball (Reimer, Beal & Schroeder, 2001). A major theme that continued to be communicated by students was that many of their actions were based on what they perceived to be expectations from coaches, parents, peers, and the campus environment. Reimer, Beal & Schroeder (2001) attributed these findings to the increased commercialization of women's college sports. More eyes on the students, means more pressure to perform, although there is still no evidence to determine why this does not seem to impact graduation rates, academic accomplishments, or the holistic experiences of female student-athletes. The work by Reimer and her colleagues is key to begin to identify the power that verbal, non-verbal, and perceived messages have on determining how student-athletes make every day choices regarding their performance within and outside of sport. Expectations from coaches, advisors, parents, teammates, and peers are powerful tools that play a major role in student-athletes' experiences.

An additional component of the different experiences and roles of male and female student-athletes are the impact of stereotypes associated with their complex identities. Student-athletes confront a variety of negative stereotypes related to their academic competencies, gender identity, sexual orientation, and role in the campus community.

Female gendered stereotype and expectations

Interestingly, the majority of past and current studies examining the academic and athletic expectations of student-athletes focus primarily on all athletes, or specifically male athletes (Brown & Hartley, 1998; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Hosick, 2016). The majority of studies related to the female student-athlete experience most often have to do

with their experiences navigating the complexity of playing perceived masculine sports and exerting their feminine (or not) identity. The same stereotypes that are prevalent for male student-athletes are not prevalent for females. There are no studies examining how female students assume the roles of ‘dumb jocks.’ This is telling of the existing stereotypes and expectations around female athletes. From a young age, girls are exposed to ideals of perfection – perfect bodies, perfect skin, perfect hair, perfect attitudes, and perfect lives. It seems as though these expectations are not lost in young adulthood. For if they were expected to perform, or even experienced performing, less than favorably academically, some sort of stereotype or preconceived notion would exist. In studying the experiences and perceptions of student-athletes, one must differentiate between males and females. The gender differences bring upon different expectations.

From a young age, girls are exposed to messages about what it means to be a woman. Duke & Kreshel (1998), state “every day we participate in the discourse of femininity; in an infinite number of ways, we create and perpetuate an understanding of what it means to be a woman in our society (p. 48). Which, unfortunately, is often understood to be perfection. Chow (2004) concludes that, “adolescent women are socialized to strive, as many women do, for perfection that lures them, but is always beyond their reach” (p. 135).

The female body is often commoditized and reduced to certain imagery, specifically how a woman views herself and how she appears to others. Women are continuously being examined, assessed and defined by images rather than non-physical traits (Duke & Kreshel, 1998). Across forms of cultural communication, and more specifically in media and images, women and girls are constantly comparing themselves

to unattainable perfect standards. The environment encourages girls to be self-conscious and aware of the high standards that they do not meet (Duke & Kreshel, 1998). By the time girls graduate high school, it is estimated that they will have spent more time consuming television and other forms of media than in the classroom (Signorelli, 1997). In addition to parents, teachers, and peers, the media has one of the most influential roles in adolescent's life.

In an extensive analysis of various forms of media commonly consumed by teenage girls, Signorelli (1997) concluded that the media has a significant contribution to reinforcing female stereotypes. The media emphasizes appearances, physique, and relationships (Signorelli, 1997). The socialization process involves girls and young women to be exposed to sociocultural standards, aware of the ideals, and subsequently internalize norms (Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005). Girls are well aware of the salient standards perpetuated in the media and continue to internalize and compare where they fit in the grand scheme of things. As girls grow older, they become increasingly aware of sociocultural norms and expectations, they also grow to be much more critical of themselves (Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005).

Specific to athletics and female athletes, Knight & Giuliano (2002) conducted a study to examine the impact of the sexualization of athletes and how spectators perceive them. They argued that individuals are socialized to believe that there are significant gender differences, which impacts the way female athletes are covered in the media. Knight & Giuliano (2002) found that people's perceptions of athletes are dependent on the language used. Female athletes that were portrayed primarily in terms of their attractiveness were viewed as less athletically talented. When given the option, however,

spectators favored articles that covered an athlete's athleticism rather than their physical appearance (Knight & Giuliano, 2002). These are all important things to consider as we examine the depiction of female athletes in the media and how the messages become internalized by athletes.

Female student-athletes specifically must deal with the complexities of managing stereotypes related to both their athlete and student identities. Harrison and his colleagues (2009) found that women tend to practice compartmentalizing their dual identities. However, when confronted with the athlete identity first, their confidence and performance on academic tasks suffer (Harrison, Stone, Shapiro, Yee, Boyd, & Rullan, 2009). This suggests that the athlete component of their identity reveals diminished self-confidence and esteem. Harrison et al (2009) upholds that,

the poor performance of females when their athletic and academic identities were tied together suggests that they were attempting to defeat the potential for a negative characterization, but that the threat of confirming the negative academic stereotype about college athletes impeded their ability to do so (p. 87).

On the contrary, male student-athletes performed better on academic assignments when primed with their athletic accomplishments. Male athletes exhibit more positive feelings of self-esteem, belonging, and confidence (Harrison et al, 2009). These findings indicate that identity threat, stereotypes, and expectations are a gendered experience and women must separate identities in order to feel empowered in all facets of the student-athlete experience, however men are encouraged and uplifted by the linked identity. Additional research related to the impact of stereotypes on women, specifically in sport is needed. Harrison et al (2009) presents a platform to continue to discuss how and why male and

female student-athletes experience campus, athletic participation, and their careers differently.

Role stereotypes and stereotype threat

Sex stereotypes and gender roles have a profound impact on the decisions individuals make regarding sport performance and participation and the value society places on particular participants. The intersection of sport and society is evident in a variety of decisions that are prevalent across the industry, including language, media exposure, job retention, and opportunities. Sex stereotypes are prevalent in sport because individuals internalize expectations associated with their gender identity, as defined by society. Chalabaev et al (2013) summarized and explored the multitude of sex stereotypes and their influence on sport participation. Stereotypes include, but are not limited to sex differences in performance, participation, and gender appropriateness, in terms of the sport(s) they are involved in. In general, women are expected to have lower performance abilities than men and are also expected to be less likely to participate in organized sport due to a lack of interest and exposure (Chalabaev et al., 2013).

Stereotype threat is a social-psychological threat that exists in a situation where a particular stereotype applies (Steele, 1997). It suggests that anything an individual does that conforms to a particular stereotype highlights the existence and adherence to such stereotypes, and may contribute to negative self-characterization and perceptions of self (Steele & Aronson, 1995). In athletics, student-athletes are exposed to negative stereotypes pertaining to their academic abilities and commitment to education. Further, women in sport are privy to negative ideas related to athletic performance and feminine identity. Populations exposed to negative stereotypes have a fear of fulfilling negative

perceptions. The activation of stereotypes in a particular environment, i.e. a college campus, has a negative affect on task performance and functioning of the students (Steele, 1997). Individuals are likely to experience anxiety, decreased confidence, and changing expectations (Stangor, Carr, & Kiang, 1998). Even if one does not fulfill the present stereotype, there is a strong fear of self-fulfillment or the possibility of being treated as a 'typical' member of that group (Steele & Aronson, 1997). The risk of adherence to a stereotype is even more daunting when it involves demeaning an individual's abilities, whether they are intellectual or athletic (Steele & Aronson, 1997).

On the contrary, scholars suggest models that counter the risk of stereotype threat and combat negative consequences of the presence of negative stigma. Shih (2004) indicates three methods that stigmatized groups may engage in – compensation, strategic interpretation, and focusing on multiple identities (p. 175). Compensation finds that individuals tend to develop additional skills to compensate for the negative stereotype. They become much more persistent, assertive, and well rounded in order to disconfirm to stereotypes (Shih, 2004). In addition to relying on strong supplementary skills, stigmatized groups rely on alternative identities to protect their self-worth and psychological well-being (Shih, 2004). In student-athletes, this may be expressed by tendencies to compartmentalize the student versus the athlete. Shih (2004) also suggests that stereotyped populations manipulate their interpretation of a stigma related to their particular social environment, in order to further protect their sense of self-worth. Specifically, students may minimize stereotypes in their particular environment, but recognize its prevalence in society at large or recognize its affect on a group but not attribute the same affects in their individual experiences (Shih, 2004).

Additional literature suggests that stereotyped groups are more likely to endorse negative perceptions in order to further understand their place in the world and make sense of the systems (Burkley & Blanton, 2009). Individuals endorse stereotypes to restore balance and create a sense of group belonging (Burkley & Blanton, 2009). This shifts blame outward and attributes performance, treatment, and stereotypes to the systematized environment (in this case, intercollegiate athletics, athletic performance, academic standards, etc.) rather than individual abilities (Burkley & Blanton, 2009).

One of the most common approaches to combating negative stereotypes is the empowerment model (Shih, 2004). This model holds that individuals whom are susceptible to negative stereotypes and face detrimental stigma, often use the stereotype as motivation. They are likely to develop a stronger sense of self-efficacy in order to overcome adversity – “many stigmatized individuals cite that they gain strength and learn valuable life lessons in confronting adversities caused by stigma” (Shih, 2004, p. 181).

In the past, stereotype threat in student-athletes has been studied for male student-athletes, and particularly the implications on black male student-athletes. Prior to working specifically with student-athletes, Steele (1997) found there to be significant negative affects of priming students with their race before taking standardized tests, which they were more than qualified to complete. Steele (1997) also discovered stereotype threat to be prevalent for women when exposed to generalizations related to their math abilities. Specifically pertaining to women in sport, Hively and El Alayi (2014) and Hermann and Vollymeyer (2016) explored the impact of stereotypes on a female athlete’s performance. Hively and El Alayi (2014) found that women performed worse on

tests of ‘natural athletic ability’ and better on tests of ‘visual ability,’ compared to men. The results indicated that, “female athletes’ attitudes regarding gender differences are more easily shaped by what others believe” (p. 53). Similarly, Hivey and El Alayi (2014) monitored the performance of female soccer players on a dribbling drill when faced with the stereotype that “females are bad at soccer”. Their findings indicated that the stereotype had a negative impact on their performance of a fairly simple drill (Hivey & El Alayi, 2014).

Brown and Hartley (1998) and Yopyk and Prentice (2005) also examined the affect of the athletic identity on academic performance in male student-athletes. Both found lower test scores, lower academic self-regard, career maturity, and overall lower levels of academic performance among students primed with their identity as an athlete. These studies are indicative of the vastly different college experiences of student-athletes and non-athletes, however they fail to include the experiences of female student-athletes specifically.

The majority of research on student-athletes focuses on gender stereotypes, identity conflict and stereotypes of student-athletes as a whole, the different experiences of minority athletes, and the impact of gender identity and sexual identity on athletic experiences. Further, most research pertaining specifically to the female student-athlete experience revolves around their gender identity and sexuality. In addition, there is minimal research on career maturity, Athletic Identity Measurement Scale, and identity foreclosure in female student-athletes specifically. There is a lack of scholarship linking stereotype threat and gender identity to the student-athlete experience as a whole. It is important to view things on a macro-level, while recognizing the micro-aggressions that

impact a female student-athletes entire college experience. We operate within systems both broad and specific. In order to understand the experiences of female student-athletes, we must conceptualize every aspect of their identity – female, student, and athlete – and how each component is impacted beyond the sport context.

It is important to note that individuals do not have to come in direct contact with a particular stereotype in order to experience debilitating effects on performance and behavior. The mere awareness that a stereotype exists has a psychological impact on performance across athletic and academic settings (Harrison et al, 2009). Simply being primed with an athletic only, academic-athlete, or neutral condition impacted the test performance of student-athletes, specifically female student-athletes. College athletes are aware of the ‘dumb-jock’ stereotype and although female student-athletes take more responsibility for their success in the classroom, the study confirmed that linking the two identities had a negative impact on standardized test performance (Harrison et al, 2009). The very threat of confirming the stereotype was enough to derail the academic abilities of participants.

The simple presence and awareness of a stereotype increases the probability of negative perceptions of self in relation to the particular identity and/or role. Individuals are likely to experience fear and tension in regard to the threat. They may also rely on coping mechanisms to resist stereotypes or chose to accept the stigma to justify the environment in which they operate (Shih, 2004). Further, due to the exposure to the perceptions, participants internalize expectations and use them to configure their individual success expectancies and subjective task value - commonly attributed to the expectancy value model. (Chalabaev et al, 2013).

Expectancy value theory

The majority of research in expectancy – value relationships is in elementary aged girls and boys. However, the themes are not exclusive to childhood. Achievement choices, performance, effort, and persistence become even more prevalent and significant in the adolescent years. Because female students are privy to the exposure of gendered expectations with regard to academics, athletics, and personal presentation, for so long before they enter the intercollegiate environment, it is important to explore the impact of the messages years after introduction.

The expectancy value theory examines the relationship between an individual's perceptions of societal influences and experiences on goals, expectancies, values and related choices (Eccles & Wigfield, 2000, p. 69). There is extensive research linking the expectancy value theory of achievement motivation to children's success in the classroom, specifically in math and reading. Expectancy value theory of motivation maintains the theoretical concept that an individual's belief about their success and ascribed value to an activity is a consequence of choices, persistence, and performance (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, p. 68). Therefore, expectancies and values directly affect achievement choices, performance, effort, and persistence in regards to a specific activity (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Expectancies refer to the probability of success and are commonly examined by achievement theorists, particularly as they pertain to academic performance, task persistence, and task choice (Eccles, 1983, p. 81).

Eccles and Wigfield (2002) identified several different components of task-value, which help frame related expectations of success and effort related to the specific activities. The value associated with a specific task is determined by the task itself and

by the goals, needs, and values of the person involved (Eccles, 1983). There are three major components of task value: attainment value, intrinsic value, and utility value.

Attainment value is related to an individual's self-schema and identity, meaning individuals are more likely to complete tasks that are a salient part of their identity. Attainment value is the established importance of doing well on a specific task (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). *Intrinsic value* is simply the enjoyment one gets from engaging in activities. Individuals are likely to experience greater psychological benefits from engaging in activities with high intrinsic value (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). *Utility value* is how well a particular task relates to individuals' short or long-term goals. All of these elements are important when considering the formation of expectancies and values.

The expectancies of task performance and success are constructed through social and cultural interactions related to gender stereotypes, social beliefs, activity stereotypes, and the individual's perceptions of these factors. Individuals are more likely to have higher expectations for themselves, if parents, teachers, and other key socializing factors hold high expectations for them as well (Eccles, 1983). Socializing factors play a major role in the development on a person's self concept, gender-role structure, and expectations. Children are more susceptible to the impact of the specific messages, especially young girls. Stereotypes and biased cultural expectations are likely to have an adverse affect on the experiences of girls involved in athletics (Eccles & Harold, 1991).

Perceptions of previous experiences in school, the community, and other social spaces are likely to affect goals, self-schema, and future expectations (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Eccles and Harold (1991) found that boys and girls varied significantly in their ability beliefs, intrinsic, utility, and attainment values in sport (p. 19). Females generally

express lower expectancies than males (Eccles, 1983, p. 82). In addition, female students more often believe that their parents have lower expectations for their math abilities than they would for males (Eccles, 1983). In general, women are viewed as less competent than men on a variety of tasks. Accepting these negative stereotypes surely has an adverse affect on females' expectancies and sense of self. Gendered stereotypes between boys and girls, men and women, go beyond the classroom and extend into the sport context. The Women's Sports Foundation, espnW, National Girls and Women in Sports Day, and the variety of other programs that advocate for women in sport would not exist if it were an equal playing field.

The role that sex and gender play in the experiences and expectations of student-athletes is significant. Eccles (1983) identified that sex is one of the most prominent mediators for values, perceptions, and expectancies. The expectancy-value model indicates the role that perceived expectations have on the formation of beliefs and values associated with a particular activity or task (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Chalabev et al, 2013). Women and girls are likely to be highly affected by gender stereotypes and gendered expectations in the sporting context, that often results in lower self-concept and attrition of involvement in athletics (Chalabev et al, 2013; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Hermann & Vollmeyer, 2016; Hivley & El-Alayli, 2014). In the gender specific context, self concept of ability, estimated task difficulty, interpretations of previous experiences, identification with masculine and feminine gender roles, and the beliefs and/or behaviors of major socializes have a significant impact on performance expectancies (Eccles & Harold, 1991). Female sport participants with strong feminine identities are also more likely to withdraw from physical activities because they fear it will impact body

performance and how peers perceive their gender identity and sexuality (Carter-Francique & Regan, 2012, p. 338). Involvement in sport and athletic activities are often viewed to be inconsistent with a female's sex role identity and thus affects the value of the activity or task (Eccles, 1983). They often perceive themselves to be less competent in such competitive physical activities (Guillet et al, 2006).

Most research in expectancy value model and sport are related to young girls who are just beginning their journey in athletics. The socialized norms and values that individuals are exposed to as children affect experiences in adolescences and adulthood. There is a need to discover the role the expectancy-value model plays in role conflict and identity in female athletes competing in high performing intercollegiate sport. Further, more research is needed to understand how female student athletes come to define and accept their identities and associated responsibilities of being a female student-athlete on a college campus and in society at large. We know of the extensive impact that sociocultural influences have on girls as they mature, specifically pertaining to gender stereotypes and expectations. Moving forward, it would be helpful to discover how similar messages are translated (or not) to young adults in a college atmosphere.

In order to ensure their success on and off the playing field, students are expected to understand and accept their role on the team and within the university. According to Benson et al (2013), the perceptions of role responsibilities and role acceptance are dependent on a variety of different internal and external factors. The elements affecting a student-athletes ability to embrace their roles and responsibilities include perceptions of role expectations from coaches, role clarity, role satisfaction, degree of personal role-conflict, and the university environment, among others (Benson et al, 2013). Most of the

time, these responsibilities are based on interpretation and general inferences, rather than formal designation by coaches, peers, and department staff (Benson et al, 2013). Students shape their actions to fit what they perceive a coach's or department's goals to be. These are rarely explicitly stated, but interpreted from experiences and context. Coaches rarely explicitly state gendered nature of expectations, but they are often implied and interpreted to be gender specific. Role definition is a crucial part of role clarification and whether or not students choose to accept their defined roles and act within the perceived parameters. Athletes are more willing to fulfill their roles when they agree to accept the responsibilities assigned by a primary role sender – usually coaches (Benson et al, 2013).

Responsibilities are likely to change depending on the level of competition, sport type, and context. Women in high performing sports compete at one of the highest levels of competition across the country. Despite the high demands of their sport, women's continuously outperform men's teams academically. Women's GSR is over 10 points higher than the men's (NCAA Research Staff, 2016, p. 12). Female student-athletes graduate at higher rates than male counterparts, often have greater success in finding employment, and are generally more engaged in the community (Busteed, 2016). What is most intriguing is attempting to discover why these expectations differ so greatly between male and female students and how that affects their everyday life experiences. Most scholarship pertaining to female athletes examine the relationship between their sexuality. There are far more pieces dedicated to the holistic experiences of male athletes. The gap indicates a need to address the obvious lack of information pertaining to how female athletes inform their lived experiences given the current state of intercollegiate and professional sport.

Drawing from the expectancy-value theoretical framework, this study will examine the effect of gender and cultural stereotypes, socializing beliefs, and previous experiences on the female student-athletes achievement related choices and expectations, as well as attempt to identify the salient role senders in these circumstances. There is a gap in research to identify why female student-athletes have such different experiences than their male counterparts, and why they have yet to be studied as closely. There is reason to contribute preliminary findings to the gendered expectations from the salient role senders in a student-athlete's career and how that subsequently affects their performance on and off the field of play.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Subjectivity Statement

This research aims to understand the experiences of female student-athletes on high athletic performing teams at a Division I university. My interest in this research comes from my own experiences as a student-athlete. My past experiences as a competitive athlete and career aspirations to work with student-athletes inspired me to study circumstances such as these. I wanted to discover how women's teams may perceive elements of their experience to be different than men's and in the future, how to create a more inclusive and supportive campus culture.

During interviews and focus groups, I encouraged the students to be honest and honor confidentiality. I emphasized that the data would help to improve the effectiveness and impact the student-athlete support services department. I was ultimately interested in learning how their current experiences are at the university and how that affects their current goals as student-athletes and future goals beyond intercollegiate competition.

Recruitment of Participants

Participants in the current study were female student-athletes at a large Division I institution in the Northeast, and part of small focus groups and individual interviews that were later transcribed for the purpose of analysis. The following chapter will discuss the specific methodology pertaining to the recruitment and demographics of participants, instrumentation methods, data collection and analysis. Before recruiting participants for the current study, I consulted and received approval from the Athletics Compliance office. After approval from athletics, an IRB was submitted and approval for the study was granted.

I used my personal contacts with the University's Athletic Department, specifically student-athlete support services, such as academic counselors and advisors within the institution. Academic advisors were given recruitment flyers to distribute to students, and the flyers were also distributed among the common study spaces for student-athletes. Coaches were not involved in the recruitment of student-athletes. As outlined in my IRB protocol, I only recruited participants through academic advisors and recruitment flyers in the support services buildings. Student-athletes were asked to contact me directly if they were interested in participation. In order to be eligible, students had to be current athletes on high performing teams at the university, defined as teams that have consistently produced winning seasons, successes in conference play and conference tournament appearances. At the University, there were four women's teams that qualified for participation in my study, out of 11 total women's sports.

After initial recruitment, I contacted those individuals who expressed interest in the study to provide them more details of the study and inquire about availabilities for

participation in focus groups. Participants received a documentation of consent to review prior to participation.

Participants

Participants included athletes from women's soccer, basketball, ice hockey, and field hockey. Their ages ranged from 19-22. The demographic composition of the participants was six Caucasian and one African American. There were one sophomore, three juniors, and two seniors. Across the four teams studied, the general population is composed of approximately 80 students. There are 22 Freshmen, 18 Sophomores, 21 Juniors, and 19 Seniors. Sixty-three of the student-athletes identify as white, 4 as Black/African-American, 1 Asian, and 12 chose not to indicate.

Participant, Age	Sport	Ethnicity	Academic Year/Athletic Eligibility
Rose, 22	Ice Hockey	White	Junior/Junior
Chloe, 20	Ice Hockey	White	Junior/Junior
Fiona, 22	Soccer	White	Senior/Junior
Brooke, 20	Basketball	African-American	Sophomore/Sophomore
Kate, 21	Field Hockey	White	Junior/Junior
Leah, 22	Field Hockey	White	Senior/Senior

Methods

This study used qualitative methods of research, specifically focus groups. I chose to use focus groups foster a collaborative and inclusive environment. My hope was to have the student-athletes share their experiences with one another and to discover

similarities and differences in treatment and expectations. This was the best way to draw upon participants' beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes o their experiences.

Based on student' availability, I scheduled two focus group sessions in a non-athletic associated building on campus. Due to challenges associated with participant availability, I was only able to organize two focus groups consisting of 2 people and two additional one-on-one interviews. During both focus groups and individual interviews participants were asked a series of questions regarding their experiences as female student-athletes at the university (Appendix A). Questions were created based on the expectancy value theory and attempts to discover the impact of prominent role senders on their experiences and task value. All sessions were transcribed using the Rev Voice Recorder application on my personal cell phone, which were later saved and uploaded to my password protected personal computer.

Focus groups lasted between 30-60 minutes and included a total of six participants. In total, there were two focus groups and two individual interviews. Focus groups and interviews were scheduled based on students' availability. The structure and format of the groups and individual sessions were ultimately the same. Both focus groups were with people on the same team, therefore they shared similar ideas and current experiences. If focus groups had been between different athletes, there would possibly be more to share in terms of the differences across teams, which would also allow for a more in-depth exploration. I used the same sequence of questions throughout all interviews and focus groups as well. Through the use of the Rev Voice Recorder app, I used pseudonyms in order to protect the privacy of each participant. To establish trustworthiness of the data and maintain credibility, it is also important to note that

participants were not required to participate, and could refuse to answer questions at any point in time (Shenton, 2004). They were encouraged to be honest through the process and notified that all direct references would be eliminated and replaced with pseudonyms. Recruitment was done based on participant interest and availability as well. All audio recordings were kept on my password-protected computer and will be destroyed after the completion of the project in April. Per federal regulations, transcriptions and data will be kept on the computer for three years and then destroyed.

Data Analysis

All focus groups and individual interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription service. I listened to each focus group and read through the written documentation of interviews several times in order to prepare for coding and have a greater understanding of participants' experiences and insight (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

I used NVIVO, a qualitative data analysis system, to assist in the coding and analyzing process. Before coding, I created preliminary (priori) coding themes, that were directly related to my research questions, goals, and existing literature (Rubin & Rubin, 2005 ; Saldaña, 2016). In the first coding cycle, I used primarily Process, In Vivo – also called verbatim or inductive coding, and priori coding methods (Saldaña, 2016). The purpose of this combination of approaches was to be able to relate the interview material back to my research goals, but also be open to new discoveries based on the participant's experiences (Saldaña, 2016). The In Vivo codes, also called verbatim coding, were helpful to best capture the students experiences, especially for those themes that I did not anticipate (Saldaña, 2016)

Following the first coding cycle, I engaged in a second coding cycle to increase the reliability of my findings and understanding of the data (Golafshani, 2003).

Throughout the second coding cycle, I recoded original findings to merge themes and concepts into more accurate and descriptive codes (Saldaña, 2016). This helped to create a greater understanding of the data and therefore begin to establish conceptual organization (Saldaña, 2016). Throughout the second cycle of coding, I also used open coding to specify concepts, reorganize themes, and discover new phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Axial coding helped to make connections between the original coding schemes and thus create a dynamic system of codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). After completing the cycles of coding, I had a complete overview of the students' responses organized into categories and subcategories to understand the context and consequences of interactions.

To establish further validity, I enrolled the help of a colleague for peer debriefing (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I consulted my colleague during the first cycle coding process to discuss preliminary codes and themes in the data. Together, we defined and refined codes to maintain consistency and clarity (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). These practices were helpful in the second cycle of coding. In the second cycle of coding, I monitored the accuracy of the data by checking codes and definitions discussed in the peer debriefing process. This ensured that I was adhering to the agreed upon codes and definitions (Schilling, 2006). The techniques of peer debriefing and consultation ensured the credibility of the data analysis procedures (Shenton, 2004). The collaborative sessions allowed for more variety in interpretation, feedback, and more in-depth examination of data (Shenton, 2004).

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Throughout the research and coding process, several themes emerged pertaining to experiences of the female student-athletes, the role that their gender plays in constructing expectations, and the ways in which the women come to understand their roles as student-athletes. Participants expressed an awareness of differential treatment and expectations among men's and women's teams, the need to balance a demanding schedule, and how they cope with these experiences. Many of the findings revolve around three major themes – gendered expectations, role conflation, and institutional neglect related to role conflict.

Gendered Experiences

It became evident that the participants recognized the difference in treatment and expectations across men's and women's teams at the university. Participants expressed a number of differences pertaining to their academic and athletic stereotypes and expectations. The magnitude of the differences and specific language used by coaches and peers is indicative of the perceived role of women in sport.

Academic Differences. The women admitted to most likely being held to higher academic standards than their male counterparts, and being expected to be independent problem solvers. Many of the women are held to at least a 3.0 standard, and they recognize that men's teams are simply expected to be eligible at a 2.0. Rose explained, “our coaches are always drilling it in our head, like, academics, academics, academics and I don't know if, like, the male coaches are really doing that as well.” Many attribute these differences to the opportunity that some men have to continue their athletic careers, “I think because we just don't make enough in a professional sport to live off of that. And

school actually matters,” said Brooke. However, according to the NCAA Research (2017), 9.1% of Baseball, 1.1% of Men’s Basketball, 1.5% of Football, 5.6% of Men’s Ice Hockey, and 1.4% of Men’s Soccer student-athletes will even get the chance to play professionally. Brooke noted, “From what I’ve seen, on my sports team, it’s like they’re just -you know maybe lack of effort and maybe because they’re professionally male sports pay more so maybe it’s actually an option for them to live off of that salary where that’s not an option for female student athletes.” This is consistent with research that indicates women have higher achieving academic goals than men (Reimer, Beal, & Schroeder, 2001). Not only do female athletes have higher reaching goals, but they are also held to elevated standards in the classroom. All student-athletes are required to maintain at least a 2.0 GPA in order to be eligible for competition (NCAA, 2017), but it is apparent that the women’s teams are often expected to value academics as an illustration in their quest for perfection (Chow, 2004; Duke & Kreshel, 1998)

According to Kate and Leah, the men constantly have to be “babied” by support staff and walked through their academic tasks. Kate and Leah also stated that the male athletes tend to be “undermined” and seem to be unable to “really do anything themselves” while the women receive no such treatment. Rather, it is assumed that they can figure it out themselves, if they have not already. This is indicative of the high career maturity, autonomy, and self-efficacy attributed to female student-athletes (Houle & Kluk, 2015; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). The need to be independent problem solvers and have a hold on their academic goals comes for implicit messages by the very people who are there to support them.

The participants expressed an awareness of stereotypes surrounding the academic abilities of student-athletes. Moreover, they face stereotypes targeted at the student-athletes population as a whole, as opposed to being specifically a woman competing in intercollegiate sports. In comparison, the participants suggested that men's teams face additional stereotypes and reduced expectations due to the fact that they are men and student-athletes. For these reasons, the participants but do not experience typical reactions to the threat, for example negative self-characterization, fear, or anxiety (Stagnor, Carr, & Kiang, 1998; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, 1997). Instead, they engage in methods in order to combat the negative stigmas.. It is interesting to note that the lack of negative stereotypes pertaining to female student-athletes may indicate an underlying message that peers hold them to higher standards.

Consistent with Shih's (2004) models to counter the risk of stereotype threat and combat negative consequences, the students compensate by continuing to defy the stereotypes, becoming more well rounded, and relying on additional skills and identities (i.e. athletic). They also minimize the impact of the stereotypes and admit that they are usually most applicable to the male athletes (Shih, 2004). Selective comparison, compensation, and relying on multiple identities are three of the most commonly occupied coping mechanisms for negative stereotypes (Shih, 2004). Most commonly, these student-athletes are selectively manipulating the stereotypes in specific instances and are relying on their holistic student-athlete identity to compensate for threats.

This response, however, can also be seen as the student's conforming stereotypes regarding the expectation for women to be well rounded and perfect (Duke & Kreshel, 1998; Chow, 2004; Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005). Cultural standards communicated

by the media, community members, and other socialization methods, demands that women and girls strive to meet the ideals of perfection ascribed to females in society – most of which are unattainable in reality (Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005). The students are more willing to identify and accept positive stereotypes related to academic success as women. However, they minimize and selectively ignore the impact of negative stereotypes regarding athletic abilities or academic expectations for the entire student-athlete population.

Athletic Differences. The academic and athletic expectations and treatment of the female student-athletes are interconnected. The most common athletic difference cited by the students is the opportunity to compete after college. Professional opportunities for men are much more promising than those for women (Breanna, 2016; Pay Inequity in Athletics, 2016). Parents and family members instilled the need for additional professional aspirations too. Brooke says, “Even from a young age, which was probably six years ago, [the message] was still like WNBA doesn’t make enough money, you won’t be able to live off that”. Even more frustrating is that their peers immediately assume that they do not have the opportunity to compete after college. Fiona explains, “So you jump to that conclusion a lot of times like oh, you might not go pro, but I think when you look at a female people are like, oh they’re definitely not going to go.” Even if they do decide to make the commitment to play professionally as Fiona believed there would be a need to make lifestyle adjustments, such as staying with host families for free and living much more frugally.

The lack of professional opportunities for women playing competitive sport is only a fraction of the gendered athletic experiences. Many of the participants expressed

concerns as they compared their experiences regarding resources, treatment, and general experiences to their male peers. The differences vary from the overall team dynamic, “They’re - - its run more like a professional team and ours I feel is more like a club team”, said Fiona. They also recognize generalizations from peers, and even recognition for their accomplishments. Kate recalled,

I don’t know. So when we won the national championship, so my freshman year, I just remember because a girl on our team, Nicole, she and I are from the same area, and our local paper, we just got this like little blurb like this big. And then on the front page there was this huge paper about this like really good basketball player from [my town] and it was like the preseason preview, it wasn’t even during the season or anything. I just remember that, I like – a lot of people were disappointed because they were like, we just did something amazing and this kid is like in a big high school – Like, showed up to preseason.

The availability and allocation of financial resources, media visibility, and student support are the most prominent elements related to how the students measure their team’s notoriety within the campus community.. The underrepresentation and lack of coverage of women’s sports in the media is an implicit indication that women’s sports are less valuable to the institution (Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015). Leah explains simply, “For the men, I feel like male sports are just more important. Like, they’re more popular”. Kate expanded and stated, “We like understand that you can’t just like be dishing out money when we don’t bring anything in. But it’s also hard because we are successful and we like do work hard”. Although they recognize the differential expectations and

treatment compared to the men, these participants continued to be confident with their identity, this is consistent with the empowerment model of dealing with negative stereotypes (Shih, 2004).

In relation to the expectancy value theory, for both athletics and academics, there does not seem to be as explicit athletic demands from role senders - individuals that most frequently send messages related to their roles and expectations as a student-athlete (Benson et al, 2013). In this case, role senders are most often coaches, family, peers, and teammates, whom are more focused on academic and holistic expectations. This indicates that the women are conditioned to value the entirety of their student-athlete identity, rather than one component over the other. Participants expressed a strong utility task value of high academic goals and expectation because it would prepare for a more successful professional career after sport (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). The attainment, intrinsic, and utility value placed on being a student-athlete is further exemplified in the role conflation they experience (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Role Conflation

“Just do it”. Rather than experiencing role conflict, as research most often attributes to high performing student-athletes, the participants expressed role conflation. Conflation is the merging of two identities, in this case the student and the athlete. Instead of expressing the desire to resist one identity and over perform in another, the participants indicated an understanding and embodiment of the entire “student-athlete” identity. They are holistically motivated be both a successful college student and successful athletic being. This aligns with previous research indicating that female student-athletes often experience greater holistic development during their undergraduate

education (Houle & Kluk, 2015; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996; Sturm, Feltz, & Gilson, 2011)

When explaining the demands of their rigorous class and training schedules, they often focused on the need to balance each aspect of their daily lives. Chloe explained,

It's all about balance. When you are at the rink, you think about the rink. When you are in the classroom, you think about the classroom. When you are at home with your . . . , friends, you focus on that and I think that's how you maintain - if you just focus on what you are doing.

This statement is congruent with research defining the distinction between role separation and role interference (Sellers, Settles, & Damas, 2002). The participants on a macro level recognize the importance of excelling in both domains, but on a day-to-day basis, they focus on one element at a time. This leads to more positive psychological well being, especially when they are excelling in both roles (Sellers, Settles, & Damas, 2002). While these roles are distinct, they do not view them as incompatible and are thus exposed to positive experiences in both.

There is no excess of time in the student-athletes' schedules, and this is often a major point of concern of the NCAA and athletic departments (NCAA Goals, 2016). According to Rose, students are expected to balance both sets of demands, "You can't use athletics as an excuse and if you do then you are not balancing your time right. So you have to get everything done." Balancing and "living in the present" is key to maintaining composure and stability in their careers. Harrison et al (2009) maintains that female student-athletes compartmentalize their identities in order to succeed in both.. They are receiving messages that they cannot and should not emphasize athletics, even though they

see male athlete doing so and receiving messaging to do so. Despite the need to focus on one particular task (Seller, Settles, & Damas, 2002), the linked student-athlete identity empowers them and gives them confidence, which is usually attributed to male athletes (Harrison et al, 2009; Shih, 2004).

Many of the students even went as far as expressing comfort in the busy schedules. Kate said, “I just feel like it’s kind of almost like all I’ve known, which just seems weird, but it’s like, I just enjoy playing sports so I just like, do it”. In fact, Leah admitted to it being easier to balance the complex demands while actively competing, “I don’t know, I feel like it’s almost for me it was easier to manage my time in the season because I’ve had a schedule, like, I had to follow - practice, games, so I knew what I had to get done and when I had to get it done.”

Interestingly, the women do not seem to experience as much conflict between their academic and athletic identity. Instead, they embody the complete package of the ‘student-athlete’, as that is the message they have continually received and that is what they have always known. Rose admits it is extremely difficult, but “It’s like at that moment you just have to go It's like the green light and you just go and there's no turning back because at that moment you need to realize, like, there's four years of this”. Meaning, there are only four years of their competitive athletic career remaining, and they have to make the best of it. They recognize the unique opportunity and take advantage of it as best they can, “Something is going to go your way and I think that's where -- like, for us, we've always just put our head down and grinded it out”, said Rose.

In addition, many students expressed a greater sense of security in their identity as an athlete and the importance that their sport plays in their educational opportunities.

Brooke noted that its key to, “understand why you’re there” and acknowledged the fact that it’s hard to sometimes choose between academic or athletic priorities because “I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t play [my sport]”. The court, rink, and/or field provides and inexplicable amount of comfort. Most have been involved in sport for the majority of their lives. It gives them reason and has been the reason they put their mind and bodies through so much. Chloe said, “Like, that’s why I’m here sitting in this classroom and that’s why I get to skate everyday. That’s why I get to lift everyday. That’s why I get to be with people that are just like me working their butts off”. They are and have always been athletes. However, unlike many of the studies pertaining to male athletes, it is as if the ‘student’ portion is not lost in their strong association with sport (Houle & Kluk, 2015; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996). It is part of it.

A truly holistic student-athlete identity. The multitude of demands from the student and athlete prototype requires women to embody a well-rounded identity to conform to typically gendered presumptions about their development. These expectations for the students are likely a result of the gendered expectations of women and especially women in sport (Chow, 2004; Duke & Kreshel, 1998). The reason many chose the university was the promise to become a well-rounded individual. Rose recalled, “I remember sitting down with [the coaches] and saying that I want to come to [here] because I’m going to be successful here on and off the ice”. Both coaches and family members make it clear that the students cannot focus entirely on one option, whether it is in the classroom or in sport. Brooke explained, “to me it was always emphasized like you have to have a plan A and a B”. This is consistent with the theme that they are expected to ‘just do it’, which stems from the expectation of women to strive for

perfection regardless of circumstances (Chow, 2004; Duke & Kreshel, 1998). Leah explained - "I don't know, I just feel like because we're like girls or women we are expected to like be on top of everything versus like the men." Coaches even emphasize and enforce the high expectations to Brooke, "I think the coaches approach it in kind of like, if you're going to be great at something, be great at everything you do".

The participants' lived experiences are congruent with the ideals of hegemonic masculinity and its impact on the expectations of women in society and also the tendency for women to comply with such demanding expectations (Carter - Francique & Regan, 2012; Lance, 2004). Fiona admits that meeting all these demands are certainly no easy feat, "[my teammate] asked me how I balance school, soccer and work because I also do work and, and everything together and I babysit and I do I feel like I have a lot of hats and I was like my first instinct to tell her is that she's like, 'How do you manage it?' I was like, 'I don't' which is funny because I think I like to think that I do". The apparent requirements to be a female student athlete are so challenging due to the systematic inequities related to sex and gender. The dominant ideologies maintains higher regard for men in sport and thus, "women remain powerless and their access and advancement remain limited", which extends the thinking that men deserve more resources and praise than women in sport (Carter - Francique & Regan, p. 378, 2012.). In general, men are honored and displayed much more for their accomplishments, and women are underrepresented, trivialized, and sexualized (Sartore-Baldwin, p. 335, 2012). The women have to prove their worth as a student-athlete, because it is not initially assumed. It also proves that women are constantly constructing, comparing, and internalizing their

understanding of what it means to be a woman, and further what it means to be a woman in sport (Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005).

The attainment value of the student-athlete identity is evident in the way in which the students express such activities because it is who they are and what they have always known (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). The unity between teammates is evident and clearly shared between teammates. Rose stated, “You can feel it. You walk into a room with all of us and it's like -- it's like a bond.” Regardless of age or sport, they all have such a strong identification with being an athlete and student-athlete. In addition, the intrinsic value of participation in intercollegiate sport is apparent in the sense of comfort and belonging in the team atmosphere (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Chloe recalled the pure joy she experiences, regardless of what happens,

I remember one day last year I was having, -- you know, a hard day. Like, I got a bad test mark in the morning before training and then I went to practice and -- like, it was almost like it felt better. Like, I went to [practice] and I just felt better -- I got [to practice] and I literally said myself I love playing [my sport] -- like, this made my day.

Despite heightened standards, lessened athletic support, and discouraging treatment by the community and department, these students find so much internal security and fulfillment from being a student-athlete. The students cope with differential treatment through empowerment. In truth, the women are eliciting coping mechanisms to internally empower themselves, when that is (ideally) the role of the university – to support them, inspire them, and make each of their goals attainable.

Institutional Neglect

Previous literature suggests that student-athletes in high performing sports are more likely to experience role conflict. However, this was not as evident in these female student-athletes. They take great pride in being a student-athlete and embodying every aspect of the demanding identity. Most expressed that they have always been tasked with being well rounded. Instances of institutional neglect, institutional gender bias, and examples of hegemonic masculinity, however do elicit responses that indicate a conflict or questioning of their purpose at the university.

The change in attitude and dynamic of the conversation after being asked about the possible differential treatment and expectations between men's and women's teams is telling. The participants were generally positive and empowered during most responses, however clearly began to second-guess their purpose when asked about differences between men's and women's teams on campus. This was a stark change feeling prideful, determined, focusing on other aspects of their lives; the students immediately expressed frustration and defeat. They were obviously frustrated. The women seem to over-compensate with positive feelings in order to override the negative affects of comparing themselves to the men. Leah and Rose explained,

It's simply just not fair at all. We work just as hard as our [men's team] but they might get a massage and we don't. They might have one extra yoga class, we don't. And it's like at what point do you look at something and you break it down and realize what's so different... we have the same hours everyday. We are in the class everyday. We are working everyday, but what's the difference?

Rather than experiencing role conflict related to the masculine versus feminine identity negotiation, as found by previous researchers (Krane et al., 2004; Lance, 2004; Mean & Kassing, 2008), the conflicting expectations were only triggered upon feelings of neglect from the university. Once students compared their athletic experiences to those of the men's teams, specifically related to additional resources, promotions, visibility, and recognition, they suddenly expressed feelings of disregard from the athletic department.

The most revealing element of these responses is that they begin by expressing frustration and being upset, but participants continue to justify the actions and decisions of the athletic department. Leah said, "It's also, in like the big problem is that we don't make money for the school". The power of 'dollar signs' is evident throughout. She continued, "Because we like understand that you can't just like be dishing out money when we don't bring anything in. But it's also hard because we are successful and we like do work hard". Kate and Leah alluded to specific examples including restricted entry to certain athletics' buildings, less access to "fuel station" snacks. Fiona, Rose, Chloe, Kate, and Leah all expressed concern over the amount of media coverage of their sport, both within the university and in the general community.

Revenue generation should not be the determining factor in their experiences in intercollegiate sport. Title IX requires that institutions incorporate equitable practices in participation, scholarships be allocated proportional to the student body, and that there are equitable benefit and services (NCWGE, 2017). Further, it does not require receiving exactly the same things, but it does require that all athletes receive equal treatment overall – including locker rooms, equipment, facilities, academic support, and publicity (NCWGE, 2017). Though there are demonstrated inequities between spending and

participation in men's and women's sports, the Department of Education has yet to take any serious action in the form of withholding federal funding (Trahan, 2016). According to the NCAA, "an athletics program can be considered gender equitable when the participants in both the men's and women's sports programs would accept as fair and equitable the overall program of the other gender" (Women, Gender Equity and Title IX, 2017). This does not seem to be the case for this particular institution.

Every student-athlete identified the differences, and all admitted to being stuck in the system.. "This is what it is I guess", claimed Fiona. I asked if they ever got frustrated with the differences and both Leah and Kate responded, "Yeah, but then again, we're never going to get anywhere with it, so... You know what you're coming into, almost, but it's also like, that's annoying". These responses are consistent with the tendency for stigmatized groups to justify treatment and endorse stereotypes in order to restore balance and understand their role for the university (Burkley & Blanton, 2009). Instead of challenging the system, they accept it and attribute the circumstances to the business of intercollegiate sport, rather than blame their athletic ability (Burkley & Blanton, 2009).

This indicates the powerful systems that we subconsciously operate under, specifically pertaining to power, privilege, and what we expect from different individuals. The students recognize that they are held to higher academic standards, face negative stereotypes, experience differential treatment, and are generally less celebrated than men's teams. Yet, there is a sense of acceptance and justification, as if they deserve such treatment. They minimize the impact of differential treatment. What is otherwise a group of strong, independent, empowered women momentarily retracts to lessened feelings of value on campus. This is a stark contrast to what is previously expressed when

discussing such positive and uplifting experiences in sport. This reaction is consistent with typical responses to stereotype threat. The awareness of a threat elicits decreased confidence, changing personal expectations, and a fear of fulfilling the stereotype (Stangor, Carr, & Kiang, 1998; Steele & Aronson, 1995). The students make the decision to ignore specific incidents that question their athletic abilities and threaten an identity that they feel so strongly about. Rather than practice separating their athletic and academic identities in order to excel in one space at a time (Mean & Kassing, 2008), the participants exemplify the need to separate their internal beliefs and external messages. The students utilize defense mechanisms to protect their strong sense of security in the student-athlete identity and override all attacks to their athletic abilities.

Participants were simultaneously empowered by their abilities, prideful in their accomplishments, but also lost within the hyper-masculine, hegemonic, and consumer driven sport industry. They shift between resisting stereotypes and then retracting and submitting to them. Broadly, the findings indicate the power of micro-aggressions, implicit biases and messages, and overall relationships with key stakeholders in one's life. The differences that the women perceived and then communicated were mostly a result of their gender identity and the ever constant battle for perfection (Chow, 2004; Duke & Kreshel, 1998) in society and specifically within in structure that historically undermines womens' worth (Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to explore possible role conflict and perceived expectations of female student-athletes that participate on high performing teams. I used key themes and concepts from existing literature to frame research

questions and later code interview data from the research participants. This process allowed me to explore the expectations communicated to student-athletes by salient role senders, and the impact of those messages on the students' daily lives. The findings provided unique insight into the complex role and identity of female student-athletes in intercollegiate sport.

The women's' experiences as high performing athletes and challenge some of the typically ascribed traits of the student-athlete population, such as role conflict. Instead, they embrace and perform with the intent to excel both as the 'student' and the 'athlete'. They take an obvious pride in being a student-athlete and what they are able to accomplish in the classroom and in sport. The participants placed at least equal value on academic and athletic successes. Though they exhibit security and serenity in being an athlete, and are not exposed to as much positive communication regarding their athletic abilities. Due to both implicit and explicit messages by coaches, peers, and family members, the students expressed the need to place a very high value on academics. This is consistent with the findings of the NCAA Gallup Report (2015) that indicates female athletes experience greater holistic success and engagement than men competing at the same level.

Most of the expectations come from explicit standards set by coaches, holistic support from parents, and the knowledge that women's professional sports do not guarantee long-term financial success. Each of these combined factors is a product of the overall gendered expectations of women to be perfect, well rounded, and persistent in their effort to do so (Duke & Kreshel, 1998; Chow, 2004). The most prominent role senders of the expectation to be well rounded were coaches and family members. Peers

and the campus community most often communicated more damaging messages about their abilities and thus had negative implications on feelings of self-worth.. For example, the students were not expected to have a career after college, were less recognized in the media, and felt the need to continue to prove their athleticism.

Participants recognized the need for women to be well rounded – regardless of level, position, etc. Women are expected to ‘just do it’ and get everything done to meet set standards. As a result the women have high reaching academic and athletic goals. They have goals to exceed the minimum GPA requirements of participation, continue their education in graduate school, and get the most of their college experience, all while earning winning seasons, winning conference championships and striving to be National Champions.

Students typically spend the day transitioning from practice, class, workouts, study groups, meetings, and other obligations. They embrace the hectic schedules and high demands, but also do so because they have feel as though they have to. Due to the messages communicated by coaches, family members, and peers, they have no other option. They are expected to be well rounded and value both academics and athletics, mostly as a result of being a woman.

The students also recognized the lack of acknowledgement of women’s accomplishments across the department and sport in general (Good, 2015; Pay Inequity in Athletics, 2016). It was at this point in the interviews that the women expressed any sort of role conflict. Typically they demonstrate stability and happiness in their daily lives, although it is extremely demanding. However, the disproportionate availability of resources and recognition by the university between men’s and women’s teams impact

their self-worth and value to the campus. What is most interesting is that each participant expressed disappointment with the differences, but continued to minimize the impact it has on their experience and justify such treatment. This speaks volumes to the power of systemic messages so deeply engrained in our subconscious that we recognize them but feel helpless in changing them or even deny having the power to do so.

Limitations

Limitations to this research study include the low number of participants (6), in comparison to the number of female student-athletes that compete in high athletic performing sports at any given institution. In addition, there is a lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the participants – five white students and one African-American. I understand that these findings may not be representative of the entire population of female student-athletes at the university and across the country. The race, socioeconomic status, family educational background, scholarship status, and other pre college factors were not explicitly explored in this study, but would affect the findings if a more diverse participate base was available. This qualitative research was not intended to speak to the experiences of every female student-athlete past, present, and future. Rather, the purpose was to simply explore the specific lived experiences of the participants of the study.

In the future, it would be beneficial to include a much greater number of participants across identities and even expand the research to all women's teams. This would allow for much greater variability in findings and reliability of themes. A longer time frame for recruitment, interviews, focus groups, and follow up sessions would also add to the clarity and breadth of responses.

Future Research and Implications

This preliminary research leaves room for future studies to explore. In addition to engaging with a larger and more diverse participant base, there needs to be a much deeper investigation of the specific messages that coaches and department staff are sending. Coaches send such persistent messages about academic accomplishments, even more so than athletics.. Academic standards are overemphasized compared to athletic performance ideals that are more widely understood without the need to explicitly communicate them. Coaches push the idea of academic excellence from early recruiting trips and all the way through the 4-5 year college experience. All participants admitted to choosing the university because of the academic and athletic opportunities it provided. It would be interesting to compare these messages to the experiences of male student-athletes and specifically where the communication differs. A content analysis of resources and materials from within the university would also reveal information between advisors, professors, coaches, the department, and students.

It was interesting to note that very few coaches and role senders pushed the idea of working in athletics. The academic goals were most often centered around applying to specific non-athletics related majors in the university. Fiona said her coach justifies high academic requirements, “If you have a 3.0 it makes it easier to apply for you know say the School of Business”. The number of women that hold leadership roles in athletics is disturbing and in no way representative of the number of young girls and women that participate in organized sport. College sport recently received a C for gender hiring practices from the 2016 Racial and Gender Report Card (Lapchick, 2017). College sport

fell in points earned from 78.8 in 2015 to 73.5 in 2016, and effectively has the lowest combined grade of all the Racial and Gender Report Cards (Lapchick, 2017).

Even among the women working in the athletic department at the university, students noticed how their gender impacted lived experiences. Fiona recalled the lack of publicity in the promotion of a female staff member,,

I think it's easy to not have to do it. It's easy just to say let the success happen and not validate what's happening because we're just going to validate this other person you know, but then so our strength and conditioning coach she, she just recently became the head strength and conditioning coach of all Olympic sports and that's huge being a female and doing that and she's been you know the strength and conditioning coach for many male teams here and I think that's another thing that should be broadcasted over the newspaper or something because it's like she's managing a ton of teams.

Put simply, Fiona stated, "I think that they've accomplished things that men have and I don't think they've gotten the, the credit". We cannot expect women to pursue professional careers in sport if they do not receive support and encouragement from people in their lives.

The state of women and their role in sport is one that continues to develop. We know that the opportunities for women to pursue viable professional playing careers in sport is few and far in between. However, we need to see more women succeeding in a variety of aspects – from administration to coaching. Even in this era, Brooke noted the importance of seeing more women involved in sport growing up and the impact it has on her life, "I mean, even today it's just so shocking, and it shouldn't be. And I kind of

believe, you know, I was always surprised to see them and what they could do, even though I was a woman, I could do the things that they could, but it felt different seeing it.” Little progress will be made in the inclusivity of sport if it is not welcoming to everyone at every level. From this study, it is evident that there is still a need for more visibility, recognition, and celebration of women in sport.

Appendix A: Interview and Focus Group Questions

1. Why did you choose to pursue your career at UConn?
2. What are some of your athletic related goals?
3. What are some of your academic goals?
4. What are some of your professional, career related goals?
5. How do you manage being both a student and an athlete?
 - a. Does one take precedent over the other?
 - b. In what circumstances?
6. What does being a student athlete mean to you?
 - a. How did you come to this meaning?
 - b. What roles do your current coach and/or past coaches have in that?
 - c. How have your parents, guardians, or family members impact this?
7. What are some of the stereotypes you are faced with as a female student-athletes?
 - a. How do you accept or challenge these?
 - b. Do they differ from male student-athletes?
8. How do the stereotypes and other messages from society (i.e. through mass media, interactions with peers and community members) affect what it means to be a student-athlete (from question 6)?
9. Do you feel you are held to different expectations than male student-athletes?
 - a. Please provide examples, whether it is in the classroom or in athletics.
10. What are the support systems you have on campus, in the community, and at home?
 - a. What role do these people play in forming expectations for yourself?
11. How do you feel in regard to the underrepresentation of women in athletics and the lack of media coverage of women's sports?
 - a. How does this impact your experiences as a student-athlete?

REFERENCES

- Benson, A., Eys, M., Surya, M., Dawson, K., and Schneider, M. (2013). Athletes' perceptions of role acceptance in interdependent sport teams. *The Sport Psychologist*, 27, p. 269-280.
- Birrell, S. (1988). Discourses on the gender/sport relationship: from women in sport to gender relations. *Exercise and Sport Science Reviews*, 16(1), 459-502.
- Brenna, A. (2016, May 5). Which sports have the largest and smallest pay gaps? *Forbes*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewbrennan/2016/05/05/the-pay-discrimination-in-sports-we-wish-didnt-exist-will-only-dissipate-with-womens-leadership/#46e64b6441d6>
- Brown, C., Hartley, D. (1998). Athletic identity and career maturity of male college student athletes. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 29, 17-26
- Burkley, M. & Blanton, H. (2009). The positive (and negative) consequences of endorsing negative self-stereotypes. *Self and Identity*, 8, p. 286-299.
- Busteed, B. (2016, Feb. 17). Female student-athletes win big on great jobs, lives. *Gallup*. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/189227/female-student-athletes-win-big-great-jobs-lives.aspx>
- Carter-Francique, A. & Regan, M. (2012) Power and politics. In Cunningham, G. & Singer, J. (Eds.), *Sociology of Sport and Physical Activity* (373-396). College Station, Texas: The Center for Sport Management Research and Education
- Carver (2011.) <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/media-center/press-releases/press-release-june-23-2011/>
- Chalabev, A., Sarrazin, P., Fontayne, P., Boiche, J., Clement-Guillotin, C. (2013). The influence of sex stereotypes and gender roles on participation and performance in sport and exercise: Review and future directions. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 14, 136-144.
- Chaplin, K. (2012). Social class and sport. In Cunningham, G. & Singer, J. (Eds.), *Sociology of Sport and Physical Activity* (353-371). College Station, Texas: The Center for Sport Management Research and Education.
- Chow, J. (2004). Adolescents' perceptions of popular teen magazines. *Journal of Advance Nursing*, 48(2), 132-139.
- Clarke, L. (2015, June 26). Five myths about women's sports. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-womens-sports/2015/06/26/8dee2470-1b5b-11e5-93b7-5eddc056ad8a_story.html?utm_term=.1d95e4c793a6

- Clay, D., Vignoles, V., & Dittmar, H. (2005). Body image and self-esteem among adolescent girls: testing the influence of sociocultural factors. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 15(2), p. 451-477.
- Cooky, C. & Lavoie, N. (2012). Playing but losing: women's sports after title ix. *American Sociological Association*, 11 (1), 42-46.
- Cooky, C., Messner, M. A., & Musto, M. (2015). "It's dude time!" A quarter century of excluding women's sports in televised news and highlight shows. *Communication & Sport*, 2167479515588761.
- Duke, L. & Kreshel, P. (1998). Negotiating femininity: girls in early adolescence read teen magazines. *Journal of Communications Inquiry*, 22(1), p. 48-71.
- Dusenberry, M, & Lee, J. (2012, June 22). The state of women's athletics, 40 years after Title IX. *Mother Jones*. Retrieved from <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/06/charts-womens-athletics-title-nine-ncaa>
- Eccles, J. (1983). Expectancies, values, and academic behaviors. In J. Spence (Ed.), *Achievement and Achievement Motivation* (p. 75-137).
- Eccles, J., and Harold, R. (1991). Gender differences in sport involvement: applying the Eccles' expectancy-value model. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 3, 7-35.
- Eccles, J. & Wigfield, A. (2002). *Motivational beliefs, values and goals*. Annual Review of Psychology, 53, 109-132.
- Eccles, J. & Wigfield, A. (2000). Expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, 68-81.
- NCAA Research, 2017. Estimated probability of competing in professional athletics . Retrieved from <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/estimated-probability-competing-professional-athletics>
- NCAA, 2017. Division I progress-toward-degree requirements. *NCAA: About*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncaa.org/about/division-i-progress-toward-degree-requirements>
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 8 (4), p. 597-606.
- Good, A. (2015, June 5). When it comes to women in sports, TV news tunes out. *USC News*. Retrieved from <https://news.usc.edu/82382/when-it-comes-to-women-in-sports-tv-news-tunes-out/>

- Guillet, E., Fontayne, P., Sarrazin, P., Brustad, R. (2006). Understanding female sport attrition in a stereotypical male sport within the framework of Eccles's expectancy-value model. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 30, 358-368.
- Harrison, K., Stone, J., Shapiro, J., Yee, S., Boyd, J., & Rullan, V. (2009). The role of gender identities and stereotype salience with the academic performance of male and female college athletes. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 33(1), p. 78-96.
- Hermann, J. M., & Vollmeyer, R. (2016). "Girls should cook, rather than kick!"—Female soccer players under stereotype threat. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 26, 94-101
- Hively, K., & El-Alayli, A. (2014). "You throw like a girl:" The effect of stereotype threat on women's athletic performance and gender stereotypes. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 15(1), 48-55.
- Hosick, M. (2015, November 6). Graduation success rates continues to climb: More student-athletes than ever are earning degrees. *NCAA Research*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/media-center/news/graduation-success-rate-continues-climb>
- Houle, J., Kluk, A. (2015). An examination of the relationship between athletic identity and career maturity in student-athletes. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 9, 24-40.
- Jones, J. (2015). As industry grows, percentage of U.S. sport fans steady. *Gallup*. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/183689/industry-grows-percentage-sports-fans-steady.aspx>
- Knight, J. & Giuliano, T. (2002). He's a laker; she's a "looker": the consequences of gender-stereotypical portrayls of male and female athletes by the print media. *Sex Roles*, 45 (3/4), p. 217-229.
- Krane, V., Choi, P., Baird, S. Aimar, C., & Kauer, K. (2004). Living the paradox: female athletes negotiate femininity and muscularity. *Sex Roles*, 50(5/6), 315 – 328.
- Lapchick, R. (2017). The 2016 racial and gender report card: college sport. *The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport*. Retrieved from <http://www.tidesport.org/college-sport.html>
- Lance, L. (2004). Gendered differences in perceived role conflict among university student-athletes. *College Student Journal*, 38 (2), p. 179-190.
- Mean, L., Kassing, J. (2008). "I would just like to be known as an athlete": managing hegemony, femininity, and heterosexuality in female sport. *Western Journal of Communication*, 72(2), 126-144.

- Miller, J. & Levy, G. (1996). Gender role conflict, gender-typed characteristics, self-concepts, and sport socialization in female athletes and nonathletes. *Sex Roles*, 35(1/2), 111-122.
- Murphy, G., Petitpas, A., Brewer, B. (1996). Identity foreclosure, athletic identity, and career maturity in intercollegiate athletes. *The Sport Psychologist*, 10, 239-246.
- “NCAA GOALS Study of the Student-Athlete Experience: Initial Summary and Findings” (Jan. 2016). Retrieved from <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/ncaa-goals-study>
- NCAA Research Staff (2016, November). Trends in graduation success rates and federal graduation rates at NCAA Division I institutions. *NCAA Research*. Retrived from <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/graduation-rates>
- NCWGE (2017). Title ix and athletics: leveling the playing field leads to long term success. National Coalition for Women & Girls in Education. Retrieved from <https://www.ncwge.org/athletics.html>
- Ottaway, A. (2016, July 20). Why don't people watch women's sports? *The Nation*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenation.com/article/why-dont-people-watch-womens-sports/>
- “Pay Inequity in Athletics” (2016). *Women's Sports Foundation*. Retrieved from <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/research/article-and-report/equity-issues/pay-inequity/>
- Puusa, A., Kuittinen, M., Kuusela, P. (2013). Paradoxical change and construction of identity in an educational organization. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 41(2), 165-178.
- Reimer, B., Beal, B., Schroeder, P. (2001). The influences of peer university culture on female student athletes' perceptions of career termination, professionalization, and social isolation. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 23(4), 364-377.
- Royce, S., Gebelt, J., Duff, R. (2003). Female athletes: being both athletic and feminine. *Athletic Insight: The Online Journal of Sport Psychology*, 5(1), 47-58.
- Rubin, H. & Rubin, I. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: the art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications Inc.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Sartore-Baldwin, M. (2012) Gender issues in sport and physical activity. In Cunningham, G. & Singer, J. (Eds.), *Sociology of Sport and Physical Activity* (329-352). College Station, Texas: The Center for Sport Management Research and Education

- Schilling, J. (2006). On the pragmatics of qualitative assessment: Designing the process for content analysis. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 22(1), 28-37.
- Sellers, R., Settles, I., & Damas, A. (2002). One role or two? The function of psychological separation in role conflict. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(3), p. 574-582.
- Shenton, A. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for information*, 22, 63-75.
- Shih, M. (2004). Positive stigma: examining resilience and empowerment in overcoming stigma. *The Annals of the American Academy*, 591, p. 175-185.
- Signorelli, N. (1997). A content analysis: reflections of girls in the media. Produced for *Children Now and the Kaiser Family Foundation*, 3-11.
- Singer, J. (2012). Race matters in sport and physical activity. In In Cunningham, G. & Singer, J. (Eds.), *Sociology of Sport and Physical Activity* (297-328). College Station, Texas: The Center for Sport Management Research and Education
- Stangor, C., Carr, C., Kiang, L. (1998). Activating stereotypes undermines task performance expectations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75(5), 1191-1197.
- Steele, C. & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(5), 797-811.
- Sturm, J., Feltz, D., Gilson, T. (2011). A comparison of athlete and student identity for division I and division III athletes. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 34 (3), p. 295-306.
- The Gallup Purdue Index Report (2015). Understanding life outcomes of former NCAA student-athletes. *NCAA Research*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/research/gallup-study-life-outcomes-former-student-athletes>
- “Title IX Frequently Asked Questions” (2017). The National Collegiate Athletic Association. Retrieved from <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/inclusion/title-ix-frequently-asked-questions#title>
- Trahan, K. (2016). Nobody’s watching: are major college sports programs treating title ix like a suggestion? VICE Sports. Retrieved from https://sports.vice.com/en_us/article/nobodys-watching-are-major-college-sports-programs-treating-title-ix-like-a-suggestion

“Understanding life outcomes of former NCAA student-athletes” (2016). *The Gallup Purdue Index Report*. Gallup World Headquarters, Washington, DC. Retrieved from http://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/2016_Gallup_NCAA_StudentAthlete_Report_20160503.pdf

“Women, Gender Equity, and Title IX” (2017). NCAA Inclusion. Retrieved from <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/inclusion/women-gender-equity-and-title-ix>

Yopyk, D., & Prentice, D. (2005). Am I an athlete or a student? Identity salience and stereotype threat in student-athletes. *Basic and applied social psychology*, 27(4), 329-336.